Implementation of a testing ground in Group T University College

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Group T University College (Leuven, Belgium) organizes academic engineering programs with following majors: electromechanical engineering, electronics engineering, chemical engineering and biochemical engineering. The main mission of the University College is education, but also applied research, internationalization and cooperation with (especially small and medium-sized) companies are important.

A testing ground is a project-based course, in which the reality-based assignments are given by companies. The students can organize themselves in teams, and each team tackles one reality-based problem. The outcome of the assignment is, depending on the subject, a dossier of technical drawings, a proof-of-concept, a demonstrator, or a software implementation. Project management is part of the job, and the students can make use of the labs and computer infrastructure in the university college. A coach from the educational team is assigned to each team. Once a week, the coach and the team evaluate the current situation together. The main aims for the implementation of a testing ground in the university college were: to motivate the students by offering them reality-based cases, to promote contacts between the students and professionals, contributing to a more professional attitude, to stimulate cooperation between students from different programs, to stimulate innovation and to give new impulses to the cooperation between the university college and companies, to expand the network of the university college, enabling opportunities towards new projects.

This testing ground has been implemented in the programs of electronics and electromechanics. The implementation consisted of different steps. In the first academic year, one trial project was set up in the electronics division, with a team of four students. Meanwhile, effort was put in making publicity and contacting and visiting companies to find suitable assignments for the following academic year. In the second year, more than 140 students of the electronics and electromechanics divisions participated in the testing ground. The educational team found it easier to spot new assignments for the third year, because this testing ground had become more known, also due to the publicity made in the first year.

The implementation of the testing ground was financially enabled through European funding (Interreg IV A project) and local funding (Province of Flemish Brabant).